

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Thornhurst Addition

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number Bounded by 650 to 742 West Main Street, Thornhurst Drive N/A ☐ not for publication  
and Rogers Court

city or town Carmel N/A ☐ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Hamilton code 057 zip code 46032

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/5/2010  
Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

- ☐ removed from the National Register.

- ☐ other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Thornhurst Addition Historic District  
Name of Property

Hamilton County, IN  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-state  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
21	7	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	2	objects
22	9	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Residential Suburbs in the  
U.S., 1830-1960

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
WOOD  
roof ASPHALT  
other SYNTHETICS: vinyl  
CONCRETE  
OTHER: celotex

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significant within the past 50 years.

**Areas of significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**ARCHITECTURE****Period of Significance**

1956-1971

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Shull, Avriel

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination if individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Thornhurst Addition Historic District  
Name of Property

Hamilton County, IN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 11

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6
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5	7	3	4	0	0
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4	4	2	5	8	7	0
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2 

1	6
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5	7	3	7	6	0
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4	4	2	5	8	6	0
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3 

1	6
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5	7	3	7	6	0
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4	4	2	5	7	0	0
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4 

1	6
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5	7	3	4	0	0
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4	4	2	5	7	0	0
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☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Connie J. Zeigler

organization C. Resources date December 4, 2008

street & number 963 Hosbrook Street telephone 317.955.0377

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46203

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance to the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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*Thornhurst Addition, Hamilton County, IN*

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**Description**

Between 1956 and 1971, Avriel Christie Shull created an addition of modern homes in Carmel, Indiana. That addition represents her work as a master builder/designer and is significant for its mid-century modern architecture.

The small town of Carmel, Indiana, is located north about 16 miles north of Indianapolis in Hamilton County. The town was originally platted by Quakers as Bethlehem in 1837. In 1846, the year that it gained a post office it became Carmel. The small town, surrounded by farms incorporated in 1874 and by 1901 had several businesses, a newspaper, and its own bank. In 1937 Carmel turned 100 years old. It had a population of 682 that year.<sup>1</sup> By 1950, Carmel counted not quite 1,500 residents and remained a small farming community, but it was on the midst of becoming a bedroom community to nearby Indianapolis.<sup>2</sup> After fair housing laws opened city neighborhoods to all races in the 1950s, fueling white flight to the suburbs and edge towns (and much more so after the courts ordered school busing for integration in Indianapolis in the 1980s), Carmel became a home base for workers who could commute the 16 miles to downtown Indianapolis along a fine strip of highway (now US 31) and later on I-465, the Indianapolis beltway. This influx would eventually turn Carmel into an Indianapolis bedroom community, but in the mid-1950s, when Avriel Shull platted her first addition to Carmel, it was still a sleepy Midwestern town.

The family farm that Avriel Shull platted as Thornhurst Addition was somewhat rolling, wooded land intersected by a small creek and bordered by State Road 234 (now West Main Street) and College Avenue (now Guilford Avenue). The first Certificate of Survey filed for this land in 1955 included lots lining SR 234, College and Thornhurst Drive and Rogers Road only the depth of one lot. The total acreage of the plat was just over 7 acres (see Attachment). By 1957, Avriel had revised the plat with a second addition, extending Thornhurst Drive north and then curving it east ending in a cul-de-sac. Rogers Court extended south from Thornhurst Drive and also ended in a cul-de-sac (see Attachment). The entire plat covered about 11 acres and the average lot size was one-third acre, though lots 14, 16 and 17 were somewhat smaller.<sup>3</sup> All the lots had expansive back or side yards. Avriel retained existing mature trees in her plan, especially in the lots that lined the edges of Main Street and Thornhurst Drive. These trees and those that Avriel planted after construction provided green beauty and an immediate wooded view for the homes. At some point, according to

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows, Editors, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 385.

<sup>2</sup> "History of Carmel, Indiana," <http://www.ci.carmel.in.us/government/History%20of%20Carmel.html> (Accessed February 5, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Certificate of Survey, Avriel Shull Collection.

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neighborhood lore, Avriel also constructed the short mortared limestone wall that lines both sides of the turn onto Thornhurst Drive from Main Street.

A small creek intersected three properties along Main Street (currently 734-720 W. Main) and Avriel decided not to develop these properties (after Avriel Shull's death local developer Harry Elliot moved three non-contributing homes onto them).<sup>4</sup> For unknown reasons, Avriel also did not develop the four properties along present-day College Avenue. Eventually, Avriel sold 21 custom-built homes in Thornhurst Addition. Seven in-fill homes were added after her death, including the three on Main Street and the homes at 17, 37, and 40 Thornhurst Drive and 33 Rogers Court. Although these homes are non-contributing, the layout of Thornhurst Addition is historic and all of the originally developed land lining Main Street, Thornhurst Drive and Rogers Court is within the boundaries of the district.

The homes that Avriel Shull built in Thornhurst Addition Historic District between 1956 and 1971 are all contributing properties. Most of the homes designs are unique within the addition but there are designs that she repeated (one appears three times in the addition) and others that she modified slightly from one home to another. The homes in Thornhurst Addition Historic District feature the post-and-beam construction popularized by the Joseph Eichler tract homes in California. This construction technique allowed for huge window expanses between the posts that supported the exterior walls. These walls of aluminum windows are ubiquitous throughout Thornhurst Addition Historic District. Not only are there window walls on the facades of most of the homes; but the rear elevations all feature these huge expanses of glass; most also have aluminum-framed, sliding glass doors original to the homes opening onto rear or side patio areas. A primary visual link between all the homes in Thornhurst Addition Historic District is the low profile they share and the low impact that creates on the landscape. It is difficult to photograph streetscapes of more than two houses in Thornhurst due to the long, low profile of the homes. Even with their space-age, modern designs, they tend to recede into the landscape. That was certainly a function of design by Avriel, who called her architectural style "organic."<sup>5</sup> The Thornhurst Addition homes are part of their landscape much more than they are perched upon it.

With few exceptions, these homes retain their original slate or stone entry floors; original clerestory windows and full-length aluminum-framed window groups with hopper windows at the bottom, as well as smaller sliding-sash, aluminum-framed windows with marble sills. They generally have original floor plans and original fireplaces. Most also retain at least some of the original decorative

<sup>4</sup> Connie Zeigler interview with Bambi Shull.

<sup>5</sup> "No Ordinary Woman," *Across Indiana*, episode #1611, at <http://www.wfyi.org/acrossIndiana.asp>. (Accessed July 11, 2008).



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details, such as exterior and interior light fixtures, built-in cabinetry, original doors with decorative escutcheon plates, and original, unusual garage doors.

The descriptions below explain the various house types within Thornhurst Addition Historic District. Generally, types were determined by roof style and then plan; in most cases roof style trumped plan as a determining factor in categorizing the houses, because the most remarkable feature of these low-lying homes tends to be their roofs. The two tri-level houses are treated as a separate type based on plan rather than roof type.

**Property Types**

**Butterfly roof—one-story and bi-level, Z-plans.**

18, 21 Thornhurst (both circa 1958—Photos 27 and 11). These butterfly roof houses have a footprint shaped much like the letter “Z,” with the center bar at a right angle to the two legs. Each has a two-wing primary facade. Both have butterfly roofs with beams extending outward to support deep eaves. Both houses feature walls that are clad in coral-colored concrete “sandstone.” Both have original fenestration featuring clerestory windows at the roof lines. Both have full-length windows with hopper-style bottom windows on one wing of the primary facade and clerestory windows on the other primary facade wing; other facades have sliding sash windows, and rear elevations have sliding glass doors. The houses at 18 and 21 Thornhurst also feature original concrete sandstone walls connected to the houses and wrapping around one side and the backyard. These walls are decorated with large concrete grills and the walls surround original, kidney-shaped swimming pools. A notable difference in the house designs is that 21 Thornhurst is a bi-level with a basement. Its protruding, primary facade wing is clad in vertical cedar siding (rather than concrete sandstone as at 18 Thornhurst) and is cantilevered over the basement windows. 18 Thornhurst has no basement and the protruding, primary facade wing rises straight upward from the foundation rather than in a cantilever. On both houses the recessed wing on the primary facade holds both the entry door and floor-to-ceiling windows. In design details, 18 Thornhurst has long, horizontal concrete grills piercing the wall cladding on the protruding wing of the facade in a beltline that also extends to the connected wall around the pool. 21 Thornhurst’s concrete grills are beneath the cantilever and on the connected wall (these concrete grills are visible in the photographs of the two houses). There is also one grill placed on the eastern (side) facade of 21. 21 Thornhurst retains an original hanging porch light fixture in modern space-ship design and has a concrete sandstone flower bed wall surrounding one wing of the facade. The properties on which these houses are placed also appear to retain original landscaping elements, including planting beds, shrubs and trees.

**Double-shed Roof—one-story, L-plan.**

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650 West Main (circa 1958; Photo 1). This L-plan house has the entry on Rogers Road. From Main Street the house appears to have a butterfly roof; however it actually features two shed roofs. The house is clad mostly in coral-color concrete "sandstone." The Main Street façade features a shed-roof wing with clerestory windows beneath the eave and two hopper-bottom, floor-to-ceiling windows beneath the clerestories. To one side of the floor-to-ceiling windows, the exterior wall on the Main Street façade is clad in red-stained cedar siding; to the other side of the windows, the walls are concrete sandstone. The Rogers Road façade has two wings. The recessed wing holds the entry door and short, sliding sash windows in three pairs. The protruding wing has clerestory windows beneath the deep eave and holds the garage door.

**Triple-Gable—one-story, U-plan.**

16, 31 and 24 Thornhurst (all circa 1959, Photos 28, 14, and 24, respectively). Another type that Avriel made multiple uses of in Thornhurst is the U-plan with a triple-gable façade. On these three-wing homes one leg of the "U" extends forward more than the other leg, creating a protruding wing. Two of the homes of this type (16 and 31 Thornhurst) are detailed similarly with lattice over façade windows and Avriel-designed, house-shaped birdhouses atop the roofs of the forward-most projecting wing. Roof beams extend out to the deep eaves on all of these homes, though the beam dimensions vary among them. 16 Thornhurst (Photo 28) has a scalloped fascia board along the eave. The walls of 16 and 31 Thornhurst are brick (16 Thornhurst is clad in a light red brick; 31 Thornhurst (Photo 14) is clad in what Avriel referred to as "used" brick) with board-and-batten siding used around windows wings, which have a slight oriel effect. Although it has the same plan as 16 and 31 Thornhurst, 24 Thornhurst looks quite different. The walls of 24 Thornhurst (Photo 24) are clad in rough fieldstone and the house has clerestory windows under the gable of the protruding wings. All three houses have floor-to-ceiling windows in their recessed entry wing surrounding the entry door. 31 Thornhurst has a higher-pitched center gable than the other homes of this type and the entry wing is asymmetrical with the entry door on one side and windows on the other; the other houses have symmetrical entry wings with the entry doors flanked by windows. Both 24 and 31 Thornhurst retain original entry doors with original decorative escutcheon plates (round bronze on 31 and Asian-inspired square design on 24 Thornhurst). The properties of all three homes retain original shrubbery and trees.

**Offset-Front Gable with Shed-roof section—one story, T-plan.**

6 and 45 Thornhurst Drive (1956 and 1958). 6 Thornhurst (Photo 30) is one of the earliest homes in Thornhurst Addition Historic District. Avriel built No. 6 Thornhurst in 1956. 6 and 45 (Photo 16) Thornhurst are not identical but they both have an offset front gable with a long shed-roof section and T-plans. 6 Thornhurst has walls of painted brick and vertical cedar siding; the eastern façade of the garage has a decorative concrete grill. The primary façade faces south and has clerestory



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windows and a pair of floor-to-ceiling windows. The entry door is on the eastern-facing façade beneath the breezeway roof. 45 Thornhurst has rough fieldstone and vertical cedar siding clad walls and a large exterior chimney covered in rough fieldstone. The western-facing primary façade is partially hidden behind an original stone wall that wraps around the first wing of the primary façade and the northern facade. The entry wing faces south. Both homes retain floor-to-ceiling windows with hopper windows at the bottom and clerestory windows under the front gables. Both retain original slate entry floors and original fireplaces. Originally both 6 and 45 Thornhurst had breezeways between the house and the garage. 6 Thornhurst retains this element, but changes to 45 Thornhurst (which is one of the more modified of the Avriel homes in the district), have resulted in the breezeway being enclosed and the garage becoming living space. Additionally a car port was added in front of the garage, and on the interior an original foyer fountain, drawn by Avriel on the blueprints of this home, has been removed. However, the house continues to convey its mid-century stylishness. A notable detail of 45 Thornhurst is the original rough fieldstone wall around the patio on the northern façade with their original wooden double doors and original hardware. 45 Thornhurst also retains its original entry door and one of the most noteworthy escutcheon plate designs in the district—a long-armed brass star behind the knob (see Photo 0015 of matching design at 37 Thornhurst).

**Offset-Front Gable, Four-wing—one-story, T-plan.**

34 Thornhurst Drive (1960; Photos 19 & 20); 29 Rogers Court (1960; Photo 12); 742 Main (1956; Photo 7). These homes share a roof type and a similar plan, but one of them looks very different due to a different wall cladding. All the homes have asymmetrical facades with off-set, protruding front-gable wings flanked by a one-wing section on one-side and a two-wing section, including garage, on the other side of the front-gable wing. Side gables are very low-pitched on all houses. 34 Thornhurst and 29 Rogers Court are very similar designs, though finish details differentiate them. 34 Thornhurst has brick walls painted a cream color. The house retains its original entry door with decorative star-shaped escutcheon plate (Photo 20) and original garage door with five stacked horizontal lights. Façade windows include clerestories under one side of the front gable and sliding sashes on the other wings. The rear façade has full-length windows with hopper bottoms and original sliding glass door. 34 Thornhurst also has an original decorative, free-standing openwork concrete block wall in front of the façade entry, creating a visual extension of the front wing beneath the porch canopy. The porch canopy that extends over the space behind the free-standing wall has a square cutout open skylight. 29 Rogers Court has rough fieldstone walls with vertical cedar siding beneath lattice in the window wings, beneath the windows. Like 34 Thornhurst, it has clerestory windows beneath half of the gable roof on the protruding wing, short sliding sash windows in the other façade wings, and full-length, hopper-bottom windows on the rear façade. The façade wall

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beneath the gable encloses interior living space behind one half and open courtyard space behind the other half. The roof slope over the open courtyard holds an unglazed skylight.

742 Main, which was one of the earliest dwellings constructed in the addition, has a narrower protruding wing than the other two homes of this type. The house is clad in tan-colored "slump" brick (a brick that is removed from the mold before it is completely set, creating a slightly slumped appearance) and vertical cedar siding.<sup>6</sup> Fenestration on the primary (south-facing) façade includes full-length windows with hoppers (described as "Flexi-view with hopper" on the blue print) on the protruding wing and a short sliding sash on one flanking wing; and replacement double-hung window on the other flanking wing; the garage door (a replacement) is in the fourth wing. Although 742 Main Street has had some alterations, its overall appearance continues to convey the historic design.

**Offset-Front Gable—one-story, Ell-plan.**

5 Thornhurst (1957; Photo 8). In 1956, Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Hubley met with Avriel in the kitchen at 6 Thornhurst to sign the contract for the construction of this home, which she built for them in 1957. While 5 Thornhurst has an offset gable front and gable ends, it is a modification of the other homes in this category because it has an L-plan. The roofline of this house includes an offset front gable which forms a very deep eave over one wing of the house and extends to meet a low-pitched side-gable over the other wing. Beneath the front gable the roof forms the canopy for a long, narrow front porch. The walls beneath this canopy are clad in vertical cedar siding. The windows are clerestories beneath the eave above full-length windows with hoppers. The other wing is slightly protruding with vertical cedar siding above slump brick. Windows are short, sliding sashes.

5 Thornhurst also retains an original garage door with four stacked horizontal lights, and an original entry door with decorative escutcheon plate. 5 Thornhurst, the third home constructed in Thornhurst, has one of Avriel's signature concrete grills inserted in its western exterior wall and an original curving walkway connecting the parking area in front of the garage (western façade) to the front door (southern façade). A slump-brick planting bed beside the curved walkway is also original, as is a square planting box attached to the primary facade. The trees in front of the house were planted by Mr. Hubley per those shown on the architect's rendering that Avriel gave the Hubleys.

**Tri-Level.**

30 Thornhurst (Photo 21) and 664 Main Street (Photo 3) were constructed circa 1958. The blueprints for these houses are numbered 138B and 139, respectively, indicating that they were

<sup>6</sup> "Slump brick" is the term that Avriel used in her plans. The definition is from "RCP Block and Brick," [http://www.rcpblock.com/products\\_block\\_slump.html](http://www.rcpblock.com/products_block_slump.html) (Accessed November 21, 2008).

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designed consecutively. Although these houses look very different from each other, they are the only two tri-levels in the Thornhurst Addition Historic District. 30 Thornhurst is currently the only home in the addition occupied by its original owner. 30 Thornhurst boasts a long shed roof with a low-pitched gable at the far east side of the façade. Visible post-and-beam construction allowed for a large window wall on the recessed entry wing of the façade, including a full length, door-sized single glazed window beside the entry door. The house retains its original entry door with decorative escutcheon plate. The protruding window area of the façade has clerestory windows and a pair of shorter windows with hoppers at the bottom. The walls of the protruding window area are clad in vertical cedar siding; the recessed bays to the west are clad in orange brick in sections between the windows, and a tall orange brick wall forms a planting bed in front of the protruding section to the east. The original garage door with five horizontal stacked lights is extant. This house appears to be a bi-level when one is looking at the façade; only the eastern elevation reveals that it is a tri-level with garage beneath the eastern section of the house and the protruding section slightly cantilevered over the garage. The interior of the house features a two-sided fireplace that opens into the kitchen and living room.

664 Main is one of the butterfly roof homes in Thornhurst Addition. The south-facing primary façade steps down from the westernmost wing, which is slightly cantilevered, to the garage, which is partially below grade. This wing has clerestory windows beneath the eave and walls clad in vertical cedar siding. The garage door has three square stacked lights. The easternmost wing is at ground level on a high point of the lot. The eastern wing's roof is pierced with a wide chimney. This wing's walls are slump brick. The fenestration of this wing includes clerestory windows below the deep eave and triple floor-to-ceiling windows with hopper bottoms. The entry door (a replacement) is also in the eastern wing. The slump brick flowerbed wall beside the door was drawn on the original house plan.<sup>7</sup> One of the most remarkable aspects of this house is the dolphin-motif, double grill on the western facade of the dwelling. On the interior this house features a two-sided fireplace.

**Double Front-Gable and shed roof—One-story and Bi-level.**

20 Thornhurst (Photo 26) and 22 Thornhurst (Photo 25) (both constructed circa 1958). These houses do not have a similar footprint but they share a distinctive double, front-gable roof line that is not found on other homes in Thornhurst. 20 Thornhurst is a low-profile, one-story dwelling with low-pitch, double gable roofline and a T-plan. A protruding wing holds clerestory windows beneath a deep eave and two, floor-to-ceiling, fixed-sash window. The eave is supported by robust brackets that rise upward from the bottom of the slightly cantilevered facade. The walls are cream-colored stucco, but were originally clad in vertical cedar siding—a change made in the 1980s. A small

<sup>7</sup> Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



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exterior patio is hidden behind one wall of the primary (east-facing) façade. The original attached garage is connected to the house beneath a shed roof at the southernmost wing. The original garage door has two horizontal lights placed side by side. The entry is on the southern-facing façade. A floor-to-ceiling, single-light window is beside the entry. The entry door has been replaced. Original landscape elements include tall pine trees in front of the house and a sweeping lawn. 22 Thornhurst is a bi-level dwelling with walls of rough fieldstone on the protruding and entry areas and vertical cedar siding on the westernmost wing, which is cantilevered over a field-stone clad basement wall. Beneath the deep eaves, clerestory windows are the only fenestration on the eastern and western gable-front wings. The shed-roof central entry area is a window wall. The entry door is surrounded by floor-to-ceiling fixed-sash windows. The roof is pierced by a wide stone chimney in this wing. The interior retains original details such as a slate entry floor and original built-in bookshelves. Mature trees and a deep setback are original landscape elements that help this large dwelling blend into its landscape.

**Shed Roof—One-story, Rectilinear plan**

704 Main Street (1957; Photo 4) is the only house of its type in the Thornhurst Addition Historic District. Its very modern look derives from its long shed roof with just a hint of gable at the far eastern end of the dwelling. The wide chimney pierces the roof almost at its western edge. The original blue prints for this house are called FHA plan #168055.<sup>8</sup> The blue prints show two open skylights in the porch canopy. A tree was originally planted to grow up through the western-most open skylight. The house reveals its post-and-beam construction along the front roof line. A deep eave is supported by a single post at the corner of the porch. Fenestration includes clerestory windows on the protruding wing and a pair of floor-to-ceiling, fixed-sash windows on the façade beside the entry door. There is also a fixed-sash window in the exterior wall that is perpendicular to the entry door. The walls are clad in brick. The plans for this house show that the lots flanking it (664 and 720 Main) were empty at the time 704 Main was constructed. This house was modified over time; the porch roof was shingled over, hiding the skylights and the original entry and garage doors were replaced. However, in a recent restoration, the two porch skylights were uncovered and restored and garage and entry doors with simple mid-century styling were installed. The house continues to demonstrate its mid-century style and its tall trees are part of the original landscape along Main Street.

**Elongated Center Gable—One-story, Rectilinear plan**

11 Thornhurst (1958; Photo 9) is the only dwelling of its type in the addition. It has a low-pitched, elongated-gable roof with deep eave and visible beam ends. Walls are clad in what the original plans

<sup>8</sup> Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Flat Folder 13 9, 4.

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call "used" brick on one half of the façade and in board-and-batten siding on the other half. The brick half of the façade features clerestory windows over floor-to-ceiling windows with hopper bottoms. This wing is recessed to create a long half-façade wide porch with a canopy supported by simple Tuscan columns (the current owners have added a turned-post balustrade between these original columns). The roof extends out to encompass the original attached garage with original garage door holding five stacked lights. The original entry door is on the wall that is perpendicular to the façade. The board-and-batten-clad primary façade wing has clerestory windows as its only fenestration. The board-and-batten siding is painted blue. The simple coach lights on the porch and garage are original, as shown in the blueprint.<sup>9</sup> On the interior this house has its original slate entry and a very large original fireplace in a brick wall in the living room. The house has a basement and two full baths.

**Flat Roof and Side Gable—One-story, Ell plan**

658 Main Street (1960; Photo 2) is the only house in Thornhurst Addition of its type. The complicated roof pattern includes a flat portion over the garage with a very low-pitch gable with deep eave at the center of the house that overhangs the flat roof. The walls of the house are clad in slump brick and vinyl siding. A large protruding wing over the visible basement wall is the most noticeable feature of the house from the south-facing primary façade. Clerestory windows are beneath the eave of half of the wall of this wing. The wall stretches eastward and then turns northward to meet a brick wall that shields a patio. The original plan does not show the free-standing wall around the patio, but it appears to be a modification that dates to the construction of the house, because it is constructed of the same slump brick as the rest of the house and it includes two of Avriel's signature concrete grills. An original wide, sliding glass door opens onto the patio from the bedroom. In July 2008, the owner of this house began removing the vinyl siding from the protruding wing and the walls surrounding the patio. He uncovered evidence of original board-and-batten siding, which is noted on the original plan of the dwelling as "Celotex board-and-batten."<sup>10</sup> Fenestration on the rear of this building includes clerestory windows above floor-to-ceiling windows with hoppers. In the interior, the house has an original two-sided, triangle-shaped fireplace and still retains the original Martha Washington brand built-in oven in the kitchen.

**Gable-end—One-story, Ell plan**

50 Thornhurst (1959; Photo 17). The façade of this home looks like a typical, mid-century ranch house. A low-pitched gable-end roof extends out to a deep eave that is supported by original (as shown on the blueprint), ornamental ironwork posts on the facade. A wide chimney pierces the roof at the central point of the L. The walls are clad in concrete sandstone that is painted celery green. A

<sup>9</sup> Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Flat Folder 13.

<sup>10</sup> Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society.



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floor-to-ceiling window is placed next to the entry door at the front of the ell. The protruding southwest wing has sliding sash windows; the prow gable-end of the other ell holds clerestory windows. Both the entry and garage doors are replacements. The façade of this house is not extraordinary, but the rear of the house reveals the clerestory and full-length windows with hoppers, and wide sliding glass doors that are found on most of the other Thornhurst houses. The interior retains its original slate entry floor, metal cabinets and built-in Martha Washington oven. Mature trees stand on the lawn in front of the house.

**Gable-front—One-story, Ell plan**

28 Thornhurst (Photo 22). The last house that Avriel constructed in Thornhurst Addition is this home. Built in 1971 for William P. Stewart, the house is designed in a 1970s contemporary style rather than the mid-century modern designs found in the other homes in the district. Higher-pitched gables and a higher profile set this house apart from the other homes, as does a protruding, primary façade garage, which forms one of the wings of the plan. The building's deep eaves are reminiscent of other Avriel designs. The walls are a mixture of rough-cut Bedford stone and board-and-batten cedar siding. Fenestration on the center wing of the home includes the entry door and paired tall windows beneath the eave over full-length windows beside the door. Simpler casement windows are used on the recessed ell. Avriel's daughter, Bambi, recalls that her mother laid the stone for the walls of this house. Although the house is much newer than others in the district, it was designed and built by Avriel and is therefore considered contributing to the district.

Thornhurst Addition Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its largely intact modern architecture designed and built by a master designer, Avriel Shull. The period of significance of the district stretches from 1956, when Avriel built the first house, to 1971, when she completed her last home here. All 21 homes designed by Avriel are contributing resources. The landscape of the district, including expansive lawns, original flower beds, deep set-backs, mature trees and shrubs, was also designed by Avriel or incorporated into her design. Lack of curbs and sidewalks and cul-de-sacs are elements of landscape design found in many Indiana subdivisions of this era. Seven homes added after Avriel Shull died are considered non-contributing, as are the walls that flank Thornhurst Drive at the entry to the addition. These walls were originally constructed by Avriel, but currently they have been deconstructed by the City of Carmel and are being rebuilt slightly north of their original location and in a slightly different configuration (upon completion they will be simple straight walls rather than retaining their original L-shape).

**Non-Contributing Resources**

There are seven non-contributing buildings in the Thornhurst Addition Historic District. Four of these homes were constructed after Avriel's death. They are one-story, ranch-style contemporary

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homes; three are located on Thornhurst Drive at 17, 37 and 40 (Photos 10, 15, and 18, respectively) and one is on Rogers Court (Photo 13). Three homes were moved into the addition after her death. These three homes were placed on lots along Main Street that Avriel had never developed because they were located near a creek on marshy land. After her death a developer purchased these lots and filled them, then moved three very similar homes onto the lots. These homes are almost identical. They are small Colonial Revival style houses constructed circa 1935. These small, one-story houses have rectilinear plans and are located at 720, 730 and 734 West Main Street). All are clad in vinyl siding and have new, double-hung sash windows (Photos 5 and 6).

In addition to seven non-contributing buildings, two entry walls flanking Thornhurst Drive are non-contributing (Photo 29). Avriel originally built these approximately 3-feet tall by 15-feet long walls of mortared limestone fieldstones. In 2008, the City of Carmel deconstructed the walls and, in December of 2008, was in the process of reconstructing them to the north of their original location. The walls will be reconstructed using some of the original materials but they will be shorter than the original walls and in a slightly different location. They are at this time and will in the future be non-contributing resources.

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Thornhurst Addition Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its significant collection of mid-century modern style homes designed by a master designer and builder, Avriel Shull. The district meets the registration requirements of the Historic Residential Suburbs in the U. S., 1830-1960.

**Avriel Shull**

In her short 45 or so years of life, Avriel Christie Shull became one of Indiana's most significant home designers. With no formal training in architecture she was a master designer/builder whose custom homes are found in the toniest neighborhoods of Indianapolis, Carmel and other Central Indiana cities and towns. By the 1970s, national periodicals sold her home design patterns to patrons all across the United States and Canada. And nearly a decade after her too-early death in 1976 hundreds of her home design patterns were still selling annually; with her husband filling the orders from the home she designed for their family in Carmel, Indiana. Avriel's use of her name for her business meant that both designer and firm became synonymous with modern design.

Avriel Christie was born on February 9, 1931—a child of the Great Depression.<sup>1</sup> Her father, Don E. Christie, vice president of Merchants National Bank in Indianapolis, and his wife, Genevieve, owned a few acres of land on the outskirts of the small town of Carmel, Indiana, where Avriel and her sister grew up.<sup>2</sup> The Christies recognized early on that Avriel was a gifted child. They provided an abundance of art supplies to keep her occupied. As a child she became interested in sewing her own clothes and began to make patterns, eventually also designing and sewing for her mother and sister. When she became interested in interior design, she redecorated the Christie family home, sewing the drapes and slip covers herself.<sup>3</sup>

Always adventurous, at age 15 Avriel persuaded a boyfriend to let her try driving his jeep. Unfortunately, she drove it into a utility pole and almost fatally injured herself. Despite the time she spent in a long recovery in and out of the hospital, precocious Avriel graduated high school at age 16 and entered John Herron Art Institute, a highly respected and rigorous program of design in Indianapolis. Although it rarely slowed her down, as a result of the damage caused to her pancreas

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<sup>1</sup> "No Ordinary Woman," *Across Indiana*, Episode #1611, at <http://www.wfyi.org/acrossindiana.asp>. (Accessed July 11, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Papers, Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>3</sup> "Indiana Biography Clipping File--S," Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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in the accident, Avriel became severely diabetic, constantly fighting the disease that would eventually win the battle and take her life at such an early age.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that Avriel's struggle with diabetes exacerbated her already strong desire to live life at breakneck speed. Her daughter, September, says of her mother that "she lived furiously."<sup>5</sup> Avriel quit college short of a degree and opened her own art business, "Avriel," in the 1940s. In 1951, she married Richard K. Shull, a young newspaperman. Avriel planned her own wedding at the Marott Hotel near downtown Indianapolis, complete with "toe dancers" and a dove release. She also designed and sewed her wedding gown. *Life* magazine published a multi-page photo essay of the wedding and its star. The essay's last photo, taken at 2 a.m. shows the young bride, still in her wedding gown, doing the can-can at the Indianapolis Press Club.<sup>6</sup> That moment, captured on black and white film, is pure Avriel.

After her marriage, Avriel settled into a career as an artist. Or so she thought. Then one day, while working on a pamphlet for a local house builder, the young artist began to think about how she would design a home. She set upon learning how to accomplish that task and she produced her first home in 1954. The "auburn-haired girl" read a 4-inch builder's manual and became the "boss lady" of her own construction site. Her chutzpah (and her husband's job as an employee of the *Indianapolis Times*) got her quite a bit of attention in the press.<sup>7</sup> A golden unicorn that she mounted on the façade earned her first home its name. An Open House drew 600 lookers through the doors of the Golden Unicorn house (still extant at 10950 Beechwood Drive) in sleepy little Carmel, a town whose entire population amounted to fewer than 1,500.<sup>8</sup> The house's modern style set her on a design path. She would repeat elements from it, such as its shed roof, clerestory windows, and vertical cedar siding on many of the homes she later built at Thornhurst. Avriel's first house, which she built at age 23, introduced her to her life's career. Although she did not like to categorize her architectural style, all of her buildings would be modern in design.

Two years after the construction of the Golden Unicorn, Avriel set about planning an entire addition that would be filled with modern-style homes she'd design. Her parents' property west of Carmel on State Road 234 became her new palette. In 1955, Don and Genevieve Christie signed the

<sup>4</sup> Connie Zeigler phone interview with Bambi Shull, June 20, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Connie Zeigler phone interview with September Shull, June 4, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> "Marryin' Avriel's Masterpiece," *Life*, May 7, 1951, 158-164.

<sup>7</sup> "Indiana Biography—S" clipping file, Indiana State Library; *Indianapolis Times* April 18, 1954.

<sup>8</sup> "History of Carmel, Indiana," <http://www.ci.carmel.in.us/government/History%20of%20Carmel.html> (accessed July 11, 2008).

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certificate of survey for the first section of Christie's Thornhurst Addition. The plat allowed for seventeen lots bordering SR 234 (now Main Street) and College Avenue (now Guilford).<sup>9</sup> Avriel came up with three or four house design prototypes that she sent off with an application to the Federal Housing Authority for approval to sell her homes in Thornhurst Addition under FHA loans. Two of the prototypes became bricks and mortar homes in Thornhurst within two years.

Avriel Shull spent the next four years completing most of the Thornhurst Addition homes, hand-picking the rock and laying it herself on the houses with fieldstone exteriors, as well as painting individual murals in bathrooms and even helping to choose the interior furniture. The last home she built in Thornhurst was constructed in 1971; her daughter, Bambi, (born in 1960) remembers watching her mother personally lay the stone on its exterior.<sup>10</sup> Long before that time, "Avriel" had become a brand. She was designing custom homes for many of the tony suburbs of Indianapolis, including Williams Creek and Meridian Hills, and in other Indiana communities, such as Evansville and Brownsburg. Both Bambi and Avriel's second daughter, September, born in 1966, remember growing up on construction sites. When they got old enough, Avriel conscripted the girls to pick up trash and stray bricks around the sites.<sup>11</sup>

As with other architectural movements, literature had a strong role in disseminating modernism. Avriel participated in this process of dissemination. By 1973, Hudson's *Home* periodical, a booklet of house plans by architects from across the country, was featuring two or three Avriel homes in each printing, as did other home-plan design booklets.<sup>12</sup> Records of plans sold indicate that her designs were popular throughout the U.S. and even in Canada. Avriel continued to design custom homes, as well as multiple-family dwellings, such as the Ladywood Condominium Complex and the Somerset Apartments, in and around Indianapolis. She also designed public buildings including the Totem Pole restaurant and the REA Terminal Station in Indianapolis and she traveled to West Virginia to design the Elkins Public Library in Elkins.<sup>13</sup>

Avriel's talent and drive carried her past her physical limitations for many years. Both Bambi and September Shull remember their mother dropping into insulin comas numerous times during their childhoods. They both recall hearing their father rushing down the steps of the home Avriel had

<sup>9</sup> "Christie's Thornhurst Addition," Certificate of Survey in Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> Connie Zeigler interview with Bambi Shull.

<sup>11</sup> Connie Zeigler interview with Bambi Shull.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Bantam/Hudson Plan Book, *100 Custom Home Plans*, November 1977 (author's collection), and various other publications in the Avriel Shull Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> Avriel Shull Collection.



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designed for their family in order to get sugar and orange juice to force down their mother's throat. Avriel's health was so seriously compromised that she and her husband rarely slept at the same time, according to Bambi, because they were afraid Avriel would slip into a coma while they slept.<sup>14</sup>

Avriel worked and lived at breakneck speed, sometimes not sleeping for three days in a row. But after years of self-treating her diabetes, going into diabetic coma and being saved by her husband or her employees, who kept candy bars on hand for such an eventuality, her body simply wore itself out. Avriel Shull died of a heart attack, a complication of the diabetes resulting from her teenage car crash, in 1976. She was 43 according to her obituary; but according to her birth date she was almost 45. She had recently been a guest speaker at a convention of home builders and she was working on seven homes at the time of her death.<sup>15</sup> As late as 1983, her husband, Richard K. Shull, was continuing to fill more than 100 orders per year for the Avriel house plans that were still being published and sold in home plan books.<sup>16</sup>

**Christie's Thornhurst Addition**

In the 1950s, Carmel, Indiana, had about 1,500 residents and remained a small farming community 16 miles or so from Indianapolis in conservative Hamilton County.<sup>17</sup> Like other small towns across the nation, it was experiencing a growth spurt in the post war years with numerous ranch-style additions springing up along its edges.

When Avriel Christie Shull set about planning an addition to Carmel, Indiana, in the mid 1950s, she made decisions that were unusual in the context of post-war Indiana housing. She would build only modern style homes. Although the rush of marriages that followed the end of World War II made housing one of the most important life issues in the U. S., most new homes built in post-war Central Indiana were either simple ranch styles or small, revival-style designs. The Carmel, Indiana, *Booster* newspaper, and the Indianapolis *Star* and Indianapolis *News* were full of advertisements for freshly platted subdivisions and additions full of sparkling new homes in the mid 1950s. In Carmel, the Johnson Addition on SR 234, a few miles east of Thornhurst Addition, advertised models such as "The Caroline, The Harrison, The Bentley," and the "Car-Mel," announcing that these "charming, gracious and conventional-built," homes were coming soon to the 88-site addition to town.<sup>18</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> Interviews with Bambi and September Shull.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Bambi Shull.

<sup>16</sup> Avriel Shull Collection.

<sup>17</sup> "History of Carmel, Indiana," <http://www.ci.carmel.in.us/government/History%20of%20Carmel.html> (Accessed February 5, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> *Carmel Booster*, June 5, 1959.

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accompanying illustrations show various iterations of ranch-style housing. In another ad, even the style named "California Contemporary" was really a simple L-shaped ranch described in the ad copy as a "lovely country colonial."<sup>19</sup> All these new ranch home subdivisions meant that Avriel's decision to stay in the modern genre that she had tested with her Golden Unicorn house set her apart.

Avriel's sense of style may have been unusual in Carmel, Indiana, and in Indiana generally in the mid-1950s, but it did not develop in a void. Especially in California, smart, young developers were earning reputations as innovators of modern design in home building. Joseph Eichler became one of the best known. Eichler's modern, or California Contemporary, homes were not for everyone but they filled a niche for design-oriented couples. With a series of young architects, Eichler began mass-producing modern style homes in numerous models at affordable prices in the late 1940s, riding the wave of growth that erupted after the war. A merchant builder, constructing homes on speculation, Eichler made modern design and luxurious materials, rather than cookie-cutter style or large size, the most important elements in his small homes.

Eichler's modern designs relied on some key components. The signature post-and-beam construction of Eichler homes allowed for large expansive areas between supports. Eichler's architects filled these spans with floor-to-ceiling windows. Sometimes, they extended the beams past the exterior walls and used them to create pergolas over private patios reached through sliding glass doors. In the process, they made the outside a significant part of the living space of Eichler homes. Eichler also made expansive and interesting interior spaces, raising the ceilings to lofty heights under butterfly roofs and lowering them to create more intimate spatial relationships under flat-roof sections. By the 1950s, Eichler was building more than 900 homes a year. His company's house designs were featured in national publications such as *Life*, *Architectural Forum* and *House and Garden*.<sup>20</sup>

It is likely that Avriel Shull knew about the Eichler homes. The homes were publicized in national magazines, including *Life*, the magazine that had covered Avriel's wedding in 1951. As a young girl and as a young married woman, Avriel traveled extensively with her parents, including at least one trip to California, which might also have exposed her to Eichler's popular housing developments.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Indianapolis News*, September 1, 1956; see also other advertisements from *Carmel Booster*, August 16, 1957; June 18, 1958; November 29, 1957; June 5, 1959; January 1, 1957; August 16, 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Jerry Ditto and Lanning Stern, *Design for Living: Eichler Homes*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995) 61-62.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Interview with Bambi Shull.

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Although we will never know if she visited an Eichler subdivision, her designs indicate that Avriel drew inspiration from the Eichler aesthetic. Her houses included many design elements found in the Eichler homes. Post-and-beam construction, butterfly roofs, floor to ceiling windows, vertical cedar siding, even the decorative door knob escutcheon plates that were some of the Eichler signature elements were also present in the Thornhurst Addition homes that Avriel constructed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Both the Eichler and the Avriel homes extended living space to the outside. Floor-to-ceiling windows nearly eliminated the boundaries between outside and inside; sliding glass doors opened to walled patios where outdoor living was almost as private as indoors. California's moderate climate made these outdoor "rooms" livable for most of the year.<sup>22</sup> Lacking California's temperate weather, Avriel nevertheless chose to incorporate the idea of minimal visual obstructions between the outside and the inside of her homes. Patios sheltered by walls or plantings, viewed through floor-length windows and reached by large sliding glass doors made living space out of rear or side lots during the warmer months in Indiana.

Avriel came to adopt a point of view about home design that paralleled Joseph Eichler's. In 1960, Eichler said: "Beauty is achieved by the architect's skill in designing details, his blend of materials and proper proportions, and above all, the exercise of good taste. In short, we produce a work of art. . ."<sup>23</sup> In 1975, Avriel said: "I am an artist—painter, sculptor, engrosser, designer—all that the word implies. I have been since birth. I am also a master builder and all that that implies...I am horrified by the number of registered architects who profess to be designers and engage in the practice at the sacrifice of all of the very disciplined elements the word 'design' denotes."<sup>24</sup>

Although Eichler made modern homes popular in California, he was not the only builder and his were not the only architects working in a modern aesthetic in the post-war U.S. Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe's International Style inspired the new generation of architects and builders in the 1940s and 1950s to incorporate his doctrine of balance, simplicity, and lack of ornamentation into their designs.<sup>25</sup> Many modernist architects (including Avriel) played with International Style elements, such as window walls, verticality, and cantilevered upper stories in their house designs. In 1945,

<sup>22</sup> Ditto and Stern, *Design for Living*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Ditto and Stern, *Design for Living*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Valerie Walters, "Around the Corner, *Carmel News Journal*, September 3, 1975.

<sup>25</sup> "Ludwig Mies van der Rohe," *About.com* <http://architecture.about.com/od/architectsaz/p/vanderrohe.htm> (accessed August 9, 2008).

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post-war housing needs inspired *Arts & Architecture* magazine to begin The Case Study House Program. The program initially asked eight nationally known architects to design a house that would "create good living conditions." The architects of the Case Study Program became a Who's Who of modernist design. Among them were Richard Neutra, Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, Julius Ralph Davidson, Richard R. Smith, A. Quincy Jones and Frederick E. Emmons (the last two were early Eichler architects), and others.<sup>26</sup>

While modernist architects were designing new sorts of exterior boxes, interior designers were also picking up new modern cues. When industrial designers Russel and Mary Wright wrote *The Guide to Easier Living* in 1951, they proselytized modern ideas about decorating and maintaining a new, less formal home and lifestyle. The Wrights helped solidified a national trend toward informal living in purportedly "self-tidying," streamlined homes.<sup>27</sup> Avriel's home interiors mirrored these new ideas with lots of built-in cabinetry, perfect for stowing away clutter, and combined kitchen and dining areas for easy entertaining and informal family dining. The interior designs that she drew included sofas with hairpin legs, vinyl topped stools, and tripod-legged lamps. Unlike the ruffled sofas and overstuffed chairs of earlier eras, which hid dust beneath and within the upholstery, the exposed sofa and chair legs of the 1950s and new washable materials made cleaning easy, eliminated places for dust and grime to hide, and indicated a modern household.

Another new design influence, during this era following World War II, came from the U.S. space program, which had accelerated during the Cold War. The national focus on rockets and space ships sparked a new look in interior design. Spiny, silver light fixtures, which gained the name, "Sputnik," in honor of the USSR's first unmanned satellite, shiny stainless-steel kitchen appliances and star-shaped door knob escutcheon plates are space-age examples of design found in Avriel's Thornhurst homes.<sup>28</sup> Both outside and inside her Thornhurst Addition homes, Avriel was a disciple of modernism.

She was also a smart businesswoman. The return of World War II veteran, many of whom quickly became newlyweds, made new housing a paramount concern. The federal government made home financing possible for the former soldiers, sea- and airmen and their new wives. Like developers

<sup>26</sup> See Elizabeth A. T. Smith, *Case Study Houses* (Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles: Taschen, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Russell and Mary Wright, *Guide to Easier Living* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith; 2006 reprint of 1950 original); Ann Kerr, *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Russel Wright Designs*, (Paducah, KY: Collectors Books, 1993 edition), 15.

<sup>28</sup> See Avriel Shull Collection, tracings and blueprints, Nos. 136 and 137.



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across the nation, Carmel's post-war housing addition designers sought Federal Housing Administration (FHA) financing approval so they could sell their homes to veterans on the G.I. Bill, as well as to other young-marrieds with moderate incomes. Avriel followed that example when she planned Thornhurst. In 1955, she filed the proper paperwork with the FHA so that her homes could qualify for FHA-approved mortgages.<sup>29</sup> Along with National Homes and ranch-house additions, Avriel's remarkable (for Carmel, Indiana) modern-style homes in Thornhurst Addition qualified for FHA financing and at least one of the first three home-buyers in Thornhurst, Charles B. Hubley, was a returning WWII vet.<sup>30</sup> Avriel sent her first three prototype home designs to the FHA for approval in 1955. She eventually constructed all three of those designs at Thornhurst (6 Thornhurst Drive, 742 and 704 Main Street). Avriel was both design and street smart. She did not sacrifice good design for the sake of a sale, but she knew that sales depended on FHA mortgages. So she made her designs work within federal guidelines.

Thornhurst Addition made Avriel Shull's reputation as a master designer/builder in the modern style. In Carmel, Indiana, her modern-style homes were extraordinary. Aside from Thornhurst and Avriel's Golden Unicorn house in the Lady Hamilton addition, few houses were high-style modern designs. Almost all new housing in post-war Carmel was in the ranch style or in various revival styles. Although the architecture of Thornhurst is most properly compared with other homes in Carmel and in Hamilton County, Avriel's mid-century modern subdivision stands out even when compared with the work of architects and developers in Indiana's much-larger capital city, Indianapolis.

A few Indianapolis architects were designing in modern styles. Architects such as Howard Wolner, Harry Couler and Evans Woollen (arguably the most well-known Indianapolis architect of the post-war period) designed some homes that were modern in design.<sup>31</sup> But none of these architects accomplished what Avriel did in Carmel. None designed entire additions or subdivisions in the mid-century modern style. Purely modern-style homes were almost as rare in 1950s Indianapolis as they were in Carmel. Most builders, owners and architects in the conservative Indianapolis area market incorporated Colonial or traditional elements into their ranch house designs in an effort to appeal to a broader market. While subdivisions and additions on the far north side of Indianapolis, such as Spring Mill Estates at 64<sup>th</sup> Street and Spring Mill Road; Greenbriar at 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Hoover Road; Williams Creek, east of Meridian Street starting at 81<sup>st</sup> Street; Meridian Hills, north of 64<sup>th</sup> Street; and

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Connie Zeigler, interview with Charles B. Hubley.

<sup>31</sup> Mike Wiltout, "The Tomorrow of Yesterday," *Indiana Preservationist*, (April 2008): 2-3.



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Pennsylvania and Illinois streets, north of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street were filling up in the late 1950s, none of these subdivisions has a preponderance of mid-century modern homes.<sup>32</sup> Whether in a new 1950s suburban development, such as Greenbriar off Spring Mill Road, or on empty lots in older suburbs, such as Meridian Hills and Williams Creek, most of Indianapolis's neighborhoods filled up with homes in the 1950s. Some of this suburban development includes a sprinkling of architect-designed modernist homes, such as those at 6431 and 6461 Sunset Lane, the Avriel-designed home in Spring Mill Estates at 415 Woodmere, the Howard Wolner design at 8111 North Meridian Street, an Evans Woollen designed home at 250 Williams Drive, and the handful of modernist homes at 79<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> streets on Illinois (at least one of which, 8060, was designed by Avriel). A few architects were adding some mid-century modern homes to these affluent neighborhoods. The less-exclusive Emblegarde and College Crest subdivisions in Washington Township, north of 92<sup>nd</sup> Street, encompassing several blocks of North Delaware and Pennsylvania streets, Washington Boulevard and Central Avenue were also developed in the early to mid-1950s.<sup>33</sup> Some of the modest-sized homes in these adjoining additions have mid-century modern lines and elements such as shed roofs and floor-to-ceiling windows--and there are few, if any, revival-styles--but again, the preponderance of homes in these subdivisions are ranches. In all the above-mentioned Indianapolis suburban developments, which sprang up or filled up in the 1950s, the vast majority of homes are either ranch homes with traditional elements or revival-style designs. Even in this larger context, Avriel's work at Thornhurst stands out.

Avriel Shull had designed and constructed at least one house before she began working on the Thornhurst Addition. She continued to design and build custom commercial buildings, homes and apartments in Carmel, Indianapolis (including dwellings at 4848 Capitol Avenue, 8060 North Illinois, and Alton and 78<sup>th</sup> streets), and elsewhere in Indiana, and to sell her designs across the nation through periodicals in the years following the completion of home-building in Thornhurst. Thornhurst Addition Historic District stands out as significant for the individual homes' mid-century modern designs and, more importantly, for its collection of residences constructed completely in the modernist style (excluding the few houses added after Avriel's death).

<sup>32</sup> Cathleen F. Donnelly, "Williams Creek," "Meridian Hills," in David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows edited, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1994.

<sup>33</sup> *Indianapolis Map* (Indianapolis: George F. Cram Company, Inc., 1945), "The Digital Collections of IUPUI University Library,  
<http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/HIM&CISOPTR=138&REC=1> (Accessed December 4, 2008).

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Thornhurst Addition Historic District, as a collection of residential architecture, is an important example of a distinctive period of construction (post World War II) and of a distinctively modern design ethos (mid-century modern) that reached its apex in the 1950s.<sup>34</sup> Thornhurst Addition Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register for its outstanding collection of modern architecture and for its design by a master designer/builder, the firm and the woman named Avriel. Although most of the homes in the addition were constructed by 1958, a few homes date to the early 1960s and the last home to 1971.<sup>35</sup> The period of significance extends from 1956 to 1971. All homes constructed by Avriel in Thornhurst Addition Historic District are considered contributing to the historic district.

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<sup>34</sup> David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, "Historic Residential Suburbs," *National Register Bulletin*, (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, September 2002) 93.

<sup>35</sup> According to Ames and McClelland, "Historic Residential Suburbs," as a general rule, "when a neighborhood as a whole was laid out more than 50 years ago and the majority of homes and other resources are greater than 50 years of age, a case for exceptional importance [Criterion Exception G] is not needed," 96.

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June 24, 2010

**Justification for Exceptional Significance**

Thornhurst Addition is an exceptionally significant collection of mid-century modernism, with a period of significance of 1956-1971. Its period of significance extends into the recent past to include the last house that architect Avriel Shull designed in subdivision in 1971. Building activity remained dormant after this, until Avriel Shull's death in 1976. After 1976, seven non-contributing houses were added to the district by a combination of new construction and relocation of several older houses to new sites within the district. The period of significance includes the longest time span during which Shull exercised architectural control over the development of the district.

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Charles B. Hubley  
Bambi Shull  
September Shull  
Don Kroger

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

According to the Certificate of Survey submitted in 1955, Thornhurst Addition is located in the southwest corner of the of the northwest quarter of Section 25 Township 18 North, Range 3 East, Hamilton County, Indiana. Specifically, the boundary of Thornhurst Addition Historic District begins approximately 100 feet east of Rogers Road and 140 feet north of Main Street, at the northeast corner of the property line of 650 Main Street. The line travels south to Main Street, turns west and thence travels along the northern boundary of the right-of-way along Main Street, past 650 Main Street, then crosses Rogers Road, continuing west along the northern edge of the right-of-way along Main Street, traveling in front of 658, 664, 704, 720, 730, 734 and 742 Main Street and 5 Thornhurst Drive. Continuing west, the line crosses Thornhurst Drive and travels along the south property line of 6 Thornhurst Drive, then extends to approximately 100 feet west of Thornhurst Drive to the southwest corner of the property line of 6 Thornhurst, where it turns north in a line approximately 100 feet west of Thornhurst Drive and thence travels along the western property line of 6 Thornhurst Drive. At this point it jogs west approximately 30 feet to the southwest corner of the property line of 16 Thornhurst Drive where it then turns north and travels along the rear property lines of 16, 18, and 20 Thornhurst Drive and along the western property line of 22 Thornhurst Drive where it meets the northwest corner of the property of 22 Thornhurst Drive and thence turns east following the tree line along the rear property lines of 22, 24, 28, 30, 34, 40 and 50 Thornhurst. The line then turns south at the northeast corner of the property line of 50 Thornhurst and continues south along the rear property line of 45 Thornhurst, continuing in a straight line south to the southeast corner of the property where it meets the rear property line of 664 Main Street, then turns due east and travels along the rear property line of 658 Main Street continues across Rogers Road and connects back to the starting point.

This boundary encompasses all the homes on Thornhurst Drive, including 5, 6, 11, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 30, 31, 34, 37, 40, 45, and 50; all homes on Rogers Court (33 and 29) and all homes with the following Main Street addresses, 650, 658, 664, 704, 720, 730, 734, 742. (See attached Site Plan.) It also encompasses landscape elements, such as mature trees and bushes, and two non-contributing walls. These boundaries include an area of approximately 11 acres.

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**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Thornhurst Addition Historic District include the boundaries of Christie's Thornhurst Addition per the original 1955 plat and the 1957 expansion of the addition, excepting parcels 1, 2-6 and 17 on the 1957 expansion. These five properties were included in the revised plat but were never developed by Avriel as part of the Thornhurst Addition.

Map of the 10th District showing contributing and noncontributing properties. The map includes a legend, a scale bar (100 ft.), a north arrow, and a photo point. Properties are numbered 1 through 50. The district boundary is shown as a thick black line. Contributing properties are outlined in black, and noncontributing properties are filled black. The map shows a street grid with Main St, Rogers Rd, and Thimhurst Dr. A photo point is marked with a camera icon and the number 3.

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